



World Down Syndrome Day 2026

A guide to the theme,
Together Against Loneliness



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WDSD website:



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Why do we need to talk about loneliness?

Everyone feels lonely sometimes. But for many people with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities, loneliness is a more common and painful experience.

Their families can feel lonely too, and feel cut off from support.



Loneliness can feel like different things:

- Not having a group of friends or a community to belong to.
- Not having a close, special person to share your feelings with.

Loneliness is a serious problem.

Loneliness is not just a sad feeling.

It is bad for our health and happiness.

It can make people feel anxious or depressed. It can also harm physical health.

A study found that loneliness can be as bad for our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.



Loneliness is a human rights issue - The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is about being connected to other people and belonging:



- Living in the community
- Getting married, having relationships and being part of a family
- Going to an inclusive school
- Having an inclusive job
- Taking part in cultural life, sport, and play

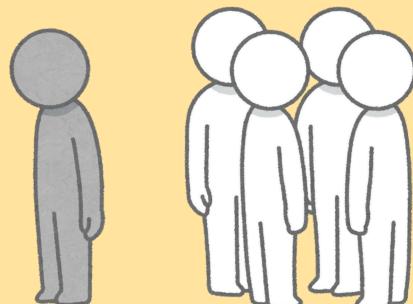
Loneliness is not a choice.

Loneliness happens when people are not supported to build and maintain connections with other people.

Sometimes, people with Down syndrome can be in the same room as others but still feel lonely.

Being present is not the same as being included.

People can feel lonely even when surrounded by others if they are not truly connected.



Loneliness is also caused by stigma and discrimination.

Loneliness happens when people are left out of schools, workplaces, and community life.



The answer is real inclusion.

It's about having good friendships and relationships.

It's the feeling of being valued and knowing you belong.

This is a problem we can solve, and 'Together Against Loneliness' is our call to action.

We want to talk about the problem of loneliness and how we help people feel connected and that they belong.



What Everyone Needs to Feel Connected and Belong

To stop loneliness, every person needs:



Real Inclusion

To be truly included in schools, jobs, and community life. Not just "being there," but taking part.



Welcoming Spaces

To feel welcome and valued, to be invited to join in, and to be safe from stigma.



Meaningful Relationships

To have strong, supportive, and meaningful relationships with friends, family, and partners.

How We Can All Help

We all have a responsibility to take action against loneliness together:

Everyone

Be the person who creates a welcoming space. Invite someone to join a conversation, a game, or a group. And challenge exclusion when you see it.



Self-Advocates

Your voices are the most important. Share your opinions on what you need to feel connected and belong.



Families

Talk to your son or daughter about their feelings. Support them to speak up for themselves. And connect with other families to build a strong community and advocate for better services.



Organisations

Create opportunities for connection, like events and groups. Lead advocacy campaigns and give self-advocates and families a platform to speak up.



Communities, Schools & Employers

Run inclusive clubs, sports, and groups that help people make connections. Actively change your policies to remove the barriers that stop people from joining in.



Governments & Leaders

We demand that you turn the CRPD from words into action. Create policies and provide funding to end segregation, stop discrimination, and build a truly inclusive society.



Together, we can make a difference.

Let's stand 'Together Against Loneliness'.



World Down Syndrome Day 2026

Who are we?

World Down Syndrome Day is a global awareness day which has been officially observed by the United Nations since 2012.

On **21 March** each year we create a single global voice advocating for the rights, inclusion and well being of people with Down syndrome.

Visit worlddownsyndromeday.org to learn more.

The World Down Syndrome Day website and associated activities are coordinated by **Down Syndrome International** in collaboration with the **National Down Syndrome Society** and the **Down's Syndrome Association**.



Visit
worlddownsyndromeday.org to learn more.



Visit ds-int.org



Visit ndss.org



Visit
downs-syndrome.org.uk